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HONORABLE DUTY TOPS CONTENTIOUS CAST FOR GRADE III, \$200,000 LUKAS CLASSIC

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2017) – **Honorable Duty**, the New Orleans Handicap (Grade II) winner who was runner-up to current early Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) favorite **Gun Runner** in June's Stephen Foster Handicap (GI), will return to action Saturday at Churchill Downs as the horse to beat against six rivals in the fifth running of the \$200,000 Lukas Classic (GIII).

The 1 1/8-mile Lukas Classic for 3-year-olds and up honors the iconic 82-year-old Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**. The four-time winner of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks and conditioner of 26 Eclipse Award-winning champions has been based at Churchill Downs' Barn 44 since 1989.

The Lukas Classic, which earned Grade III status for the first time and received a \$25,000 purse increase to \$200,000, is the centerpiece of a Churchill Downs stakes tripleheader that shares the spotlight with top milers in the \$100,000 Ack Ack (GIII) and 3-year-olds in the \$100,000 Jefferson Cup (Listed) at 1 1/8 miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course – the only stakes race on grass during the September Meet.

Churchill Downs admission gates open Saturday at 11:30 a.m. (all times Eastern) and the first of 11 races is 12:45 p.m. The Lukas Classic will go as Race 9 at approximately 4:49 p.m.

Honorable Duty, owned by **David A. Ross' DAARS Inc.** and trained by **Brendan Walsh**, has amassed \$674,276 from six wins, four seconds and a third in 14 career starts. The 5-year-old Distorted Humor gelding swept Fair Grounds' winter dirt series for older horses – the \$75,000 Tenacious, \$125,000 Mineshaft Handicap (GIII) and \$400,000 New Orleans Handicap (GII) – before finishing second in Churchill Downs' two prominent races for older horses, the \$400,000 Alysheba Presented by Big Fish Casino (GII) on Kentucky Oaks Day and the \$500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap Presented by GE Appliances (GI) on June 17.

Honorable Duty is well-rested since finishing second, seven lengths back of comfortable winner Gun Runner, in the 1 1/8-mile Foster 15 weeks ago.

"He's been training really great since the Stephen Foster," Walsh said. "We kept him at home this summer and he put his first published breeze since the race in early August. He worked six furlongs (in 1:12.60) the other morning [Sept. 23] with **Corey (Lanerie)** aboard and he just did it so effortlessly. He loves this surface and I think he'll fit this race well coming back off the layoff."

Honorable Duty landed the outside post No. 7 for the Lukas Classic and will be ridden for the first time by Lanerie, who began the week with a 12-7 lead over **Florent Geroux** and **Brian Hernandez Jr.** in the Churchill Downs' jockey standings as he attempts to collect his 14th riding title in the last 16 meets beneath the Twin Spires.

Chief among Honorable Duty's rivals in the contentious Lukas Classic cast are stakes winners **Fear the Cowboy** and **Eagle**.

Kathleen Amaya and **Raffaele Centofanti's** Fear the Cowboy (24-8-7-1—\$490,319) was a two-length winner of the \$200,000 West Virginia Governor's Stakes in his last start at Mountaineer Casino Racetrack & Resort on Aug. 5. Trained by **Efren Loza Jr.**, the 5-year-old son of Cowboy Cal also won the \$100,000 Skip Away (GIII) at Gulfstream Park earlier in the year.

William S. Farish's multiple stakes-winner Eagle (22-7-7-2—\$740,806) defeated Fear the Cowboy by a head two starts ago in the \$100,000 Michael G. Schaefer Memorial at Indiana Grand on July 15. In his most recent start on Aug. 26 for trainer **Neil Howard**, the 5-year-old son of Candy Ride (ARG) was second to **Just Call Kenny** in the \$100,000 Philip H. Iselin (GIII) at Monmouth Park.

The complete Lukas Classic field from the rail out (with jockeys and assigned weights): **Seeking the Soul** (Geroux, 121 pounds); **Albano** (Channing Hill, 121); Fear the Cowboy (Jesus Rios, 123); **Flashy Jewel** (Chris Landeros, 121); **Money Flows** (Miguel Mena, 121); Eagle (Hernandez Jr., 121); and Honorable Duty (Lanerie, 123).

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Flashy Jewel, an \$80,000 claim by owner **Michael Hui** and trainer **Mike Maker**, and Albano, a three-time stakes winner now under the care of trainer **William Don Bennett**, figure to help determine the pace.

General admission to Churchill Downs on Saturday is \$3 and reserved seat packages start at \$10, which are available for purchase online at www.ChurchillDowns.com.

In addition to the live action, there are a dozen major simulcast races from across the country with Breeders' Cup implications on Saturday: the \$500,000 Joe Hirsch Turf Classic (GI), \$400,000 Beldame (GI), \$350,000 Vosburgh (GI) and \$300,000 Pilgrim (GIII) from Belmont Park; the \$300,000 Awesome Again (GI), \$300,000 Zenyatta (GI), \$300,000 Rodeo Drive (GI), \$300,000 FrontRunner (GI) and \$300,000 Chandelier (GI) from Santa Anita; and the Baltimore/Washington International Turf Cup (GII), Commonwealth Derby (GIII) and Commonwealth Oaks (GIII) from Laurel.

The FrontRunner for 2-year-olds and Chandelier for 2-year-old fillies are Prep Season races on the Road to the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks, respectively, which award points (10-4-2-1) to the Top 4 finishers in those races.

Saturday's **National Weather Service** forecast for Louisville calls for sunny skies with a high near 72.

Saturday is the penultimate day of Churchill Downs' 11-date September Meet. Closing day is Sunday.

VETERAN AWESOME SLEW FACES RISING STARS THE PLAYER, WARRIOR'S CLUB IN 25TH RUNNING OF GRADE III, \$100,000 ACK ACK AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2017) – Live Oak Plantation's veteran **Awsome Slew**, a graded stakes winner who has faced some the top middle-distance runners in American racing during his 2017 season, will take on several promising newcomers in a group of eight rivals set to compete in Saturday's 25th running of the \$100,000 Ack Ack (Grade III) at Churchill Downs.

The race for 3-year-olds and up over the track's one-turn mile distance is one of three stakes events scheduled on the penultimate racing program of the track's 11-day September Meet. Also on the Saturday schedule are the fifth running of the \$200,000 Lukas Classic (GIII), a 1 1/8-mile race for 3-year-olds and up, and the \$100,000 Jefferson Cup (Listed), a 1 1/8 mile event for 3-year-olds on the Matt Winn Turf Course. The Ack Ack is scheduled as the 10th of 11 races on the program that begins at 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern). Post time for the Ack Ack is scheduled for 5:20 p.m.

The 4-year-old **Awsome Slew** has collected a single win from seven starts on the year, but has run well against a stellar roster of rivals throughout the year since the colt was focused on one-turn distances.

Awsome Slew moved to the stable of trainer **Make Casse** early in the year and collected his only victory of the season in a win over multiple Grade I winner **A.P. Indian** in the seven-furlong Commonwealth (GIII) at Keeneland. Other strong efforts during the season include runner-up finishes to **Limousine Liberal** in the seven-furlong Churchill Downs (GII) on Kentucky Derby Day, **Sharp Azteca** in the Gulfstream Park Handicap (GII), **Drefong** in Saratoga's seven-furlong Forego (GI) and **Mind Your Biscuits** in the Belmont Sprint Championship (GII) over seven-furlongs at Belmont Park. **Awsome Slew** also finished fourth behind **Mor Spirit** and **Sharp Azteca** in the one-mile Metropolitan Handicap (GI) at Belmont Park.

The son of **Awsome Again**, who won the 1998 Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) at Churchill Downs, drew post four in the Ack Ack and will be ridden by **Corey Lanerie**, the September Meet's leading jockey.

A pair of rising stars – **William "Buff" Bradley** and **Carl Hurst's The Player** and **Churchill Downs Racing Club's Warrior's Club** – seek their first graded stakes success in the Ack Ack.

The Player, a 4-year-old homebred son of **Street Hero** trained by co-owner **Bradley**, enters the race off an easy one-mile allowance victory at Ellis Park. His best career effort was a runner-up finish to **Cupid** in the 2016 Indiana Derby (GII) and two of his three career victories came at Churchill Downs, including back-to-back wins during his 3-year-old season. **Bradley's** colt has a career record of 3-2-1 in eight races with earnings of \$265,885. **The Player** will be ridden from post seven by Hall of Fame jockey **Calvin Borel**, who has a record four career victories in the Ack Ack.

Warrior's Club enters the Ack Ack of a pair of strong Saratoga outings that included a three-length allowance win at 6 ½ furlongs and a close runner-up finish at seven furlongs to **Neolithic**, who finished third in his next outing in the Grade I Woodward on Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) contender **Gun Runner**. Conditioned by Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**, the 3-year-old son of Warrior's Reward won last fall's \$200,000 Spendthrift Stallion Stakes, a race restricted to the offspring of stallions standing at **Spendthrift Farm**, and won a one-mile allowance race at Oaklawn Park earlier in the year. Warrior's Reward has a career slate of 3-3-3 in 16 races and will be ridden from post five by **Jon Court**.

Another compelling contender in the Ack Ack is **Susan Moulton's Zulu**, who makes his first start for trainer **Wayne Catalano**. The son of Bernardini, who was a \$900,000 yearling purchase by **Stonestreet Farm LLC** and **Susan Magnier**, reeled off back-to-back victories for former trainer **Todd Pletcher** in his first two starts in early 2016 before a runner-up finish behind **Mohaymen** in Gulfstream Park's Fountain of Youth (GII). He won last December's seven-furlong \$60,000 Tamarac Stakes at Gulfstream Park, but went to the sidelines after three subsequent losses capped by a last-place finish in a field of five in Gulfstream's \$75,000 Jebelbar on April 30. **Channing Hill** will ride from Zulu from post eight.

The race is named in honor of **Cain Hoy Stable's** 1971 Horse of the Year **Ack Ack**, who is enshrined in the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. In his only Churchill Downs appearance, Ack Ack won the 1969 Derby Trial, a race now known as the Pat Day Mile (GIII).

The field for the Ack Ack from the rail out (with jockey, assigned weight): **Harmac** (James Graham, 118), **Conquest Big E**. (Florent Geroux, 121), **Etruscan** (Jesus Castanon, 121), **Awesome Slew** (Lanerie, 121), **Warrior's Club** (Court, 121), **Pinson** (C.J. McMahon, 121), **The Player** (Borel, 121), **Zulu** (Hill, 121) and **Gray Sky** (Chris Landeros, 121).

SUPER DERBY WINNER MR. MISUNDERSTOOD TOPS JEFFERSON CUP FIELD

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2017) – Flurry Racing Stables' Mr. Misunderstood will attempt to notch his third consecutive victory in Saturday's 41st running of the \$100,000 Jefferson Cup (Listed) for 3-year-olds at 1 1/8 miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course at Churchill Downs.

Carded as Race 8, the Jefferson Cup is the first of three stakes races on the 11-race program with a scheduled post time of 4:18 p.m. (all times Eastern). The \$200,000 Lukas Classic (Grade III) and \$100,000 Ack Ack (GIII) close out the stakes action as Races 9 and 10, respectively.

Trained by **Brad Cox**, Mr. Misunderstood exits a three-length victory in Louisiana Downs' Super Derby. The gelding by Archarcharch is perfect in five starts on the turf and has an overall record of 10-6-1-0—\$243,794.

Jockey **Florent Geroux** has the call on Mr. Misunderstood who will break from post position No. 3.

Cox also entered **Zilla Racing Stables' Adonis Creed** (10-2-1-2—\$100,945) in the Jefferson Cup, who was recently transferred from trainer **Kiaran McLaughlin**.

One of the main threats to Mr. Misunderstood could be **Lothenbach Stables' late-running Giant Payday**. Trained by **Ian Wilkes**, the three-time winner was most recently a one-length victor in the Aug. 26 Mystic Lake Derby at Canterbury Park after closing from more than 14 lengths off the early pace.

Giant Payday's stablemate **Mr Cub** (6-2-1-0—\$130,867), who was a 2 ¾-length allowance winner at Kentucky Downs on Sept. 6, will break from post position No. 7 with **Joe Rocco Jr.** aboard. Wilkes' son-in-law **Chris Landeros** has the call on Giant Payday.

New to the Churchill Downs scene is **Panic Stable LLC's Your Way**. Trained by **Jane Cibelli**, the son of Harlan's Holiday is seeking his third consecutive victory after two narrow scores at Monmouth Park in a maiden special weight and allowance race, respectively. Your Way (6-2-0-1—\$53,259) would be 30-year veteran trainer Cibelli's first entrant at Churchill Downs.

Bronson (9-3-2-1—\$176,260), who was transferred to trainer **Mike Maker** from **Todd Pletcher**, will cut back in distance from a third-place effort in the 1 5/16-mile Dueling Grounds Derby at Kentucky Downs.

Guest Suite (8-3-0-2—\$231,490) was once on the Kentucky Derby trail after winning the Jan. 21 Lecomte Stakes (GIII) at Fair Grounds but hasn't been seen since a fifth-place effort in a May 27 allowance race at Churchill Downs. The gelded-son of Quality Road will be trying the turf for the first time.

Rounding out the field is **My Bariley** (11-2-3-2—\$98,119). The runner-up to Giant Payday in the Mystic Lake Derby is seeking his first stakes victory for Arlington Park-based trainer **Tony Granitz**.

The complete Jefferson Cup field from the rail out (with jockey): Bronson (Corey Lanerie); Giant Payday (Landeros); Mr. Misunderstood (Geroux); Your Way (James Graham); My Bariley (Jose Valdivia Jr.); Guest Suite (Brian Hernandez Jr.); Mr Cub (Rocco Jr.); and Adonis Creed (Shaun Bridgmohan).

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